



Facebook Marketing by Private Design Schools in the Higher Education Industry in Sri Lanka

Alex *QUAH Ban Thong*^{1*} --- Md *Gapar Md Johar*² --- Nalin *Abeysekera*³

¹PhD student, Management & Science University

²Management & Science University, University Drive, Off Persiaran Olahraga, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

³The Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Abstract

The swift growth and revolution in the social media globally catapulted by easy access to internet supported by technological advancements and availability of mobile devices for the public, social media marketing has become an unlimited way to reach the high school students (HSS) in Sri Lanka. The growth of social media is phenomenal supported by technological advancement by globally multinational companies specialised in making better and stronger phones with faster and superior software and applications. The usage of Facebook as the main tool to reach the target audience is phenomenal in Sri Lanka. Despite the fact that the growth and development of social media especially the usage of Facebook in Sri Lanka which is assisted by the factors that support the growth and usage of mobile devices and development of ICT, many Private Design Schools (PDS) in Sri Lanka are not realizing the full potential. Many contributing factors such as the know-how, the speed the social media is growing, the disadvantages of having a very open marketing and many reasons of not using social media for marketing. Information of the result on the investment, the effectiveness of Facebook to gain the required results will be encouraging to all PDS that this may be a good channel to pay more attention to. Understanding the reasons of such gap and the factors affecting the growth and development of social media would be very useful for the marketing arms of the PDS to make use of Facebook to reach the high school students at the relatively lower cost ratio.

Keywords: Higher education, Social media marketing, High school student, Design schools, ROI, Facebook, Culture, Sri Lanka.



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1. Introduction

Facebook is defined in Cambridge Dictionary as “A website where you can show information about yourself and communicate with groups of friends”. Facebook users can customize and create their own profiles with videos, photos and personal information of themselves. Friends can browse the profiles of other friends and write messages on their pages. It is a known fact that Facebook is the largest social media in the world and far reach the target audience faster and more cost effective in compare to the traditional way of marketing. It is commonly used globally but is Facebook really used openly and effectively in Sri Lanka for the promotion of Private Design School.

There are none or very little research done in Sri Lanka pertaining to the use of Facebook Marketing relating directly to Private Design School (PDS) in the Higher Education Sector. I would like to find out how Facebook is being used by the PDS in promoting Design Programs. In all revenue generating business including PDS, effective and efficient marketing channels need to be established and tap onto to increase sales and this applies to PDS as enrolment of students are the blood line of the school. Sri Lanka is growing relatively fast in the development of usage of Facebook and this is a good time for PDS to set the platform right to grow in tandem. The key supporting infrastructure had started growing in the recent years after almost 3 decades of civil war which ended in 2009. Basing on statistics of internet development in Sri Lanka in both land and mobile, the usage of internet in Sri Lanka which is the mother of social media namely Facebook as one of them has much room to grow.

The definition of higher education is stated as “Education provided by College or University” (www.merriam-webster.com). The definition of Higher Education Institutes in Sri Lanka as quoted by University Grants Committee; “Higher Educational Institution” means a University, Campus, Open University, University College, or Centre for Higher Learning established or deemed to be established under the University Act” (www.ugc.ac.lk). The target market is students who had graduated from High School who are from Grade 12 to 13 from High Schools as the minimum requirement for enrolment into the Private Higher Education. Design as defined by Farlex, ‘The art or practice of designing or making designs’.

It is highly influenced by cultural and social perception of the society and differs over time and place.

Facebook

Facebook is currently the world largest social network with over 1.4 billion users which is as big as the world’s most populous country-China as shown in Figure 1. By comparison to other social media network, twitter (646 million and Instagram (152 million). It has come a long way from being founded by a group of students in a Harvard dorm room. Today, the social media giant is worth USD210 billion and still growing. More than 1.3 billion people use Facebook on a mobile device on a monthly basis, that’s like 1/7 of the people on planet Earth (Edward, 2014). It’s currently the fastest way to reach your target audience.

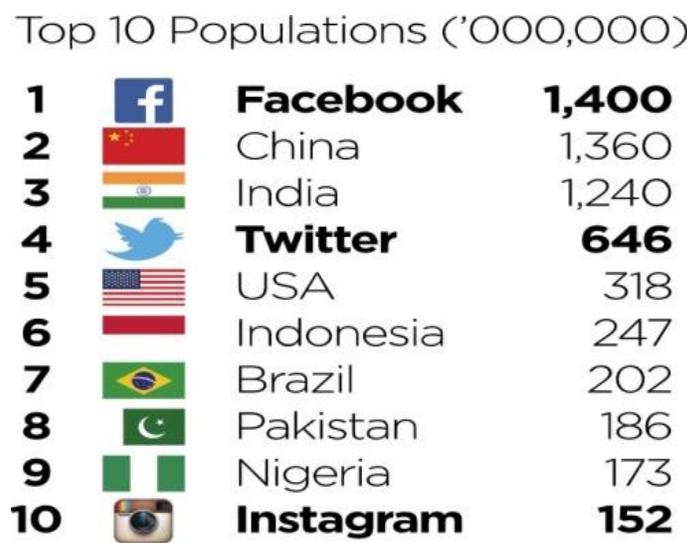


Figure-1. Facebook Population
(Source: Madden (2014))

Survey had shown for an advertiser to reach at least 50 million users that it takes 38 years with Radio medium, 13 years for a TV medium and just 4 years with internet. There are over 7 billion populations in the world with China 1.4 billion, India 1.2 billion, USA 300 million and Indonesia 240 million populations. The number of users of the biggest social media Facebook is in comparison with the top 3 to 4 countries with the biggest populations in the world (Bilgil, 2014). Efficient marketing of a product or services is to be able to reach and bring the information required to the right target market for them to take action as to come forward and purchase or sample our products. The market that used to be reachable by many marketing channels has now linked and registered with many social media around the world which make it easier to reach as well as with more focus.

There are many various methods to measure ROI for Facebook marketing. It is very important to understand the various measurement tools for the purpose of the survey to be able to analyze the results for the PDS for enrolment. In a study by Business Insider (Heggesteun, 2013), there are 4 metrics used to measure ROI for Facebook namely the 1) level of activity on Fan Page, 2) the impact on results, 3) how far the campaign on the Facebook reach in the target market and 4) the level of brand awareness in the market. In another study done in the US by Business Insider as shown in Figure 2, the main concern is exposure to the market followed by the number of people who get to know the products/services.

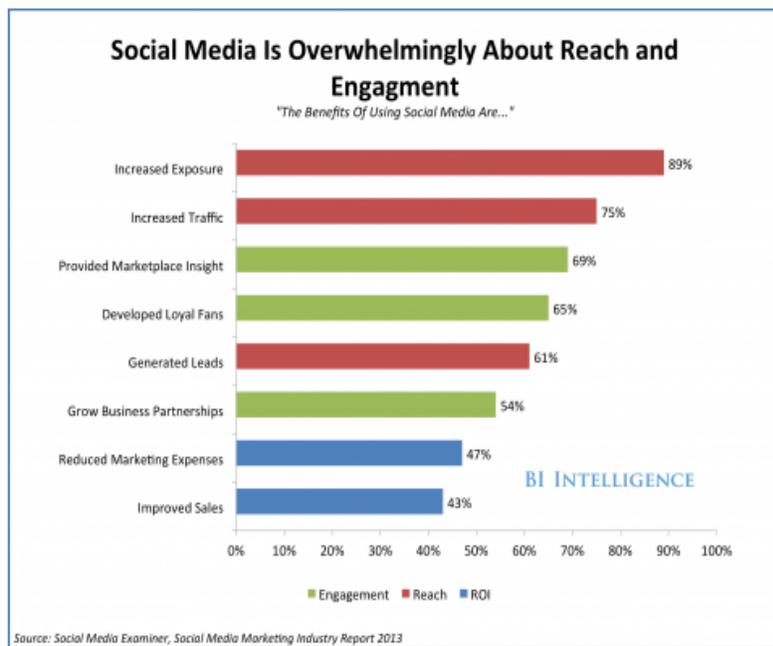


Figure-2. Engagement, Reach and ROI (Source: Business Insider (2013))

Sri Lanka

The tropical paradise of Sri Lanka has captivated travelers from around the world for hundreds of years. As shown in Figure 3, located in the Indian Ocean off the Southern tip of India, Sri Lanka is an island covering a land area of just 65,610 square kilometers. White sandy beaches to the scenic hill country, wildlife sanctuaries and the historic sites of the cultural triangle, Sri Lanka offers a wide variety of attractions. Sri Lanka has the ever-smiling and extremely hospitable people – the very reason why it’s called the ‘Land of Smiles’.

Sri Lanka is also a hub for the international apparel/garment industry. The apparel/garment industry is one of the biggest industries in Sri Lanka and a vital driving force in the country’s socio-economic growth. The industry employs 15% of Sri Lanka’s workforce and accounts for nearly half of the country’s total exports. In fact relative to its population, Sri Lanka is one of the top apparel producing countries in the world. The apparels produced in Sri Lanka are of the highest quality, fashionable and manufactured through a 100% ethical process.



Figure-3. Location of Sri Lanka (Source: map of world, 2013)

Sri Lanka 2 main exports are tea products and apparels/garments among other products shown in Figure 4. Sri Lanka’s apparel export industry is the most significant and dynamic contributor for Sri Lanka’s economy. It has enjoyed epic growth over the past 4 decades and it is today Sri Lanka’s primary foreign exchange earner accounting to 40% of the total exports and 52% of industrial products exports as shown in the government statistics 2013. This industry is entirely privately owned has successfully exploited the opportunities in the international market. A supermodel shows off Victoria's Secret's latest line backed by design excellence; an Olympic swimmer swims through the water, his well-designed Speedo swimwear taking him closer to gold and glory. Sri Lanka clothes the world, redefines industry frontiers, and connects international super brands such as GAP, Victoria's Secret, Next, Liz Claiborne, Nike, Jones New York, Pink, Tommy Hilfiger, Triumph, Abercrombie & Fitch, Ann Taylor, Speedo, Marks & Spencer and Land's End.

There are over 220 exporters in this industry with a few relatively big exporters for international famous brands such as MAS, Brandix, Aitken Spence, Odel, Hirdaramani, etc. The demand for good and creative designers is overwhelmingly high due to the global expectations of what Sri Lanka is producing.

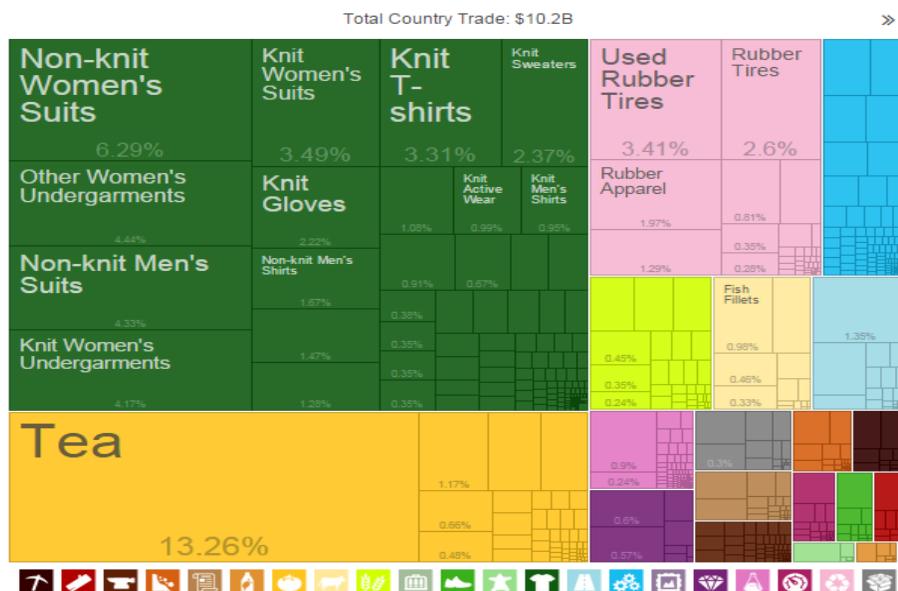


Figure-4. Sri Lanka Export Year 2012
(Source: The Atlas of Economic Complexity (2013))

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Private Higher Education Providers in Design Program

The study was designed in 2 parts. The first one is a direct observation study on the extent of the use by PDS on how Facebook is used to promote their Design Program. The variables used for the measurement was gathered from a few literature reviews on common ROI used for measuring social media effectiveness. The second study was a survey done by a consultant company called (Loop Solution).

Research found that there are 5 notable PDS registered in Sri Lanka that offers Design Programs from Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Degree level as shown on Table 1. Besides these 5 PSD, there is also other private higher education that provides such programs but they are not specialized on design program as these PDS core programs are more business related rather than design related. Notable there is also a well-known government funded University called University of Moratuwa delivering Bachelor of Design in Fashion Design which is also not included in this research as it is not a private school.

Table-1. List of the 5 Private Higher Education Providers that Provides Fashion Design Program in Sri Lanka

No	School That Offers Design Program	Website	Facebook
1	Academy of Design (AOD)	http://www.aod.lk/degrees/ba-hons-fashion-design/	https://www.facebook.com/AODSriLanka
2	Raffles Design Institute (RDI)	http://www.raffles.edu.lk/bachelor-fashion-design	https://www.facebook.com/RafflesColombo
3	Lanka Institute of Fashion Technology (LIFT)	http://lift.lk/advanced-diploma-fashion-design	https://www.facebook.com/lift.lk
4	Brandix College of Clothing Technology (BCCT)	http://www.brandix.com/brandix/brandix_college.php	http://www.brandix.com/brandix/brandix_college.php
5	Academy of Multimedia Design and Technology (AMDT)	http://amdt.lk/portfolio_courses/fashion-design-marketing	https://www.facebook.com/AMDTsriLanka

To measure the use of social media by these PHE, there are 4 key areas used for benchmark comparisons (Heggstein, 2013). A survey was conducted by direct observation on all 5 PDS’s Facebook and their Website and the detailed findings in Appendix 1 with a sample of their official Website showing the Social Media and Facebook icons and their official Facebook page as shown in Appendix 2.

The summary of the findings as below:

1. Average Likes per Day since Inception of Facebook Account (Table 2 and Table 3): Even though BCCT, AMDT and RDI were the first 3 PDS which started the Facebook Account but AOD and LIFT had shown that they had consciously used Facebook actively by increasing their Average Likes as they started using Facebook since April 2011 and June 2012 respectively. AOD and LIFT has the highest average likes per day. Both have about 44 and 46 likes per day respectively since inception of using Facebook for marketing.
2. Total Likes from Inception till Dec 2014 (Table 4): From the observation of the total number of Likes, other than RDI which has a relatively low ‘Likes’ of 7,000 since inception, the 4 other PDS has around 40,000 ‘Likes’ with AOD trending almost 60,000 ‘Likes’.
3. The Frequency between Updates (Table 5): This is an important indicator showing the activeness of PDS of using Facebook for marketing. All communication of news sharing will be relevant if they are done timely.

The same result, RDI has the longest period between news updates up to 5 days as compare to the other 4 PDS which is 3 days and below.

4. Visibility of Facebook Icon on Website: Only BCCT doesn't show the Facebook icon in their website. Facebook icon on AOD, RDI and LIFT is positioned quite prominently on the top right hand of their official website but the icon was placed not so prominent at the bottom on the official website of AMDT (Appendix 1).

Table-2. Average Likes/Year
Average Likes/Day from Inception

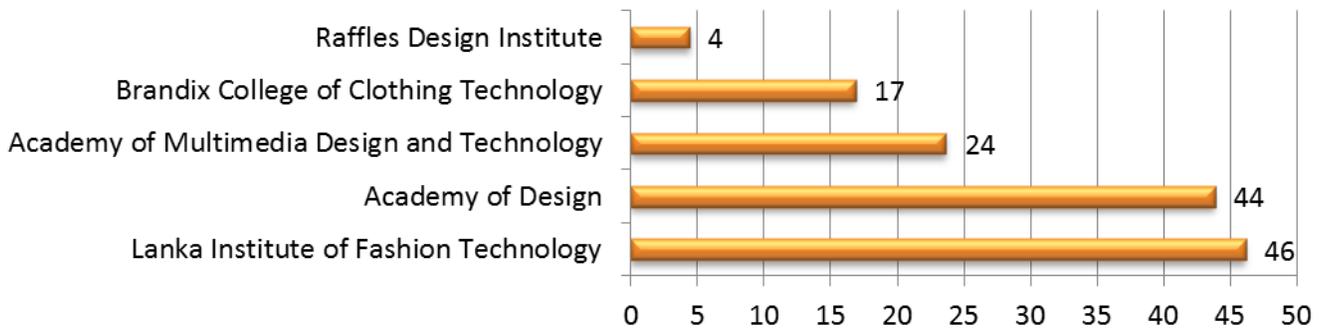


Table-3. Inception of Facebook Account and When the PDS Was Founded

No	PDS	Started Facebook	Founded on
1	Brandix College of Clothing Technology (BCCT)	Sep-08	1969
2	Academy of Multimedia Design and Technology (AMDT)	Mar-09	2005
3	Raffles Design Institute (RDI)	May-10	2011
4	Academy of Design (AOD)	Apr-11	2001
5	Lanka Institute of Fashion Technology (LIFT)	Jun-12	2000

Table-4. Total Likes from Inception till Dec 2014

Total Likes From Inception till Dec 2014

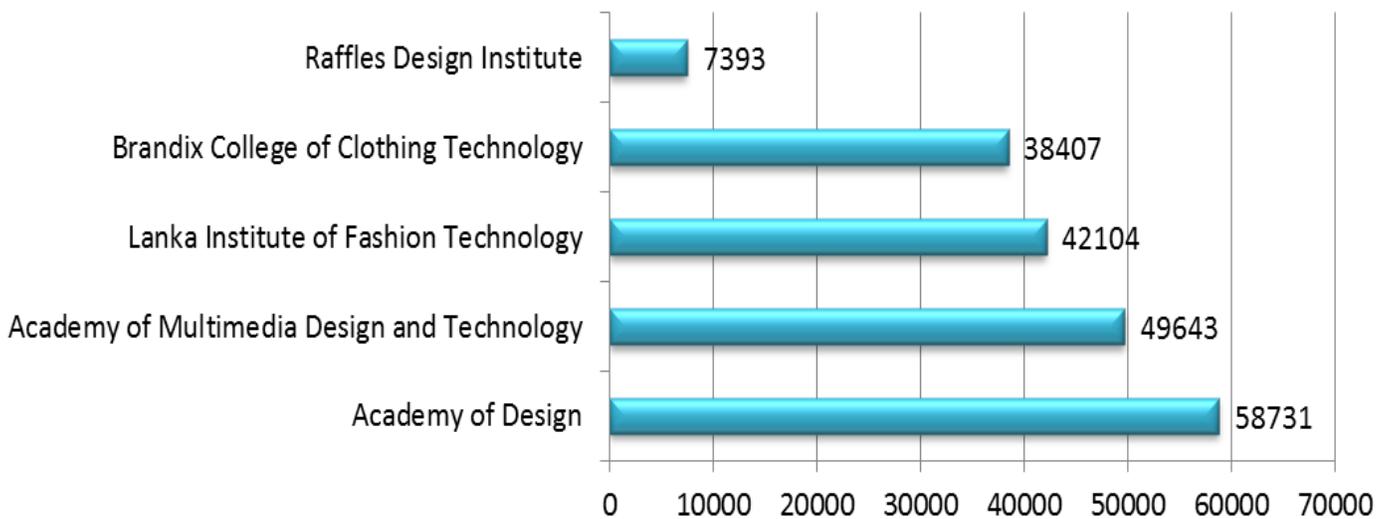
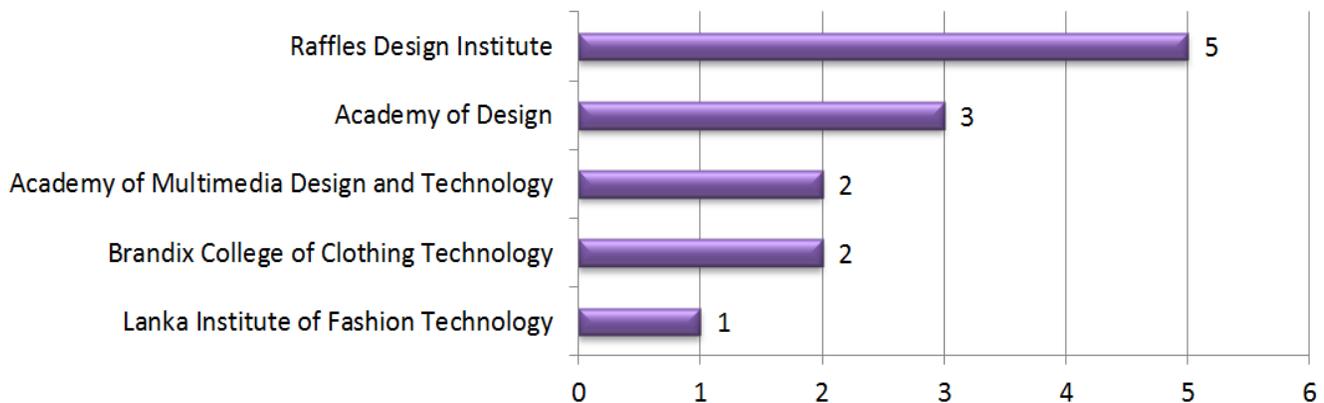


Table-5. Frequency of Number of Days between Updates

Number of Days in Between Updates on Facebook



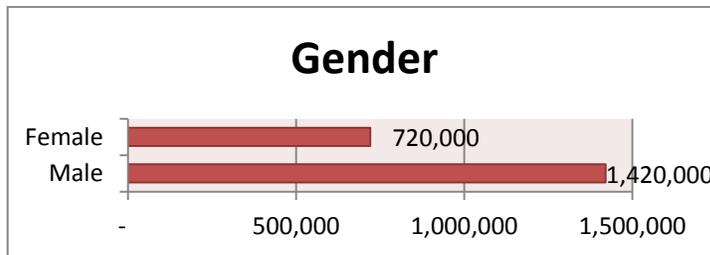
One of the key limitation of this method is that the results are very dynamic and ever changing which may change in an instance by the administrator of the Facebook Account. The consistency of the usage of Facebook may change in an instance due to change in the online administrator of the PDS and many unforeseeable reasons. The measurements may also not reflect the true picture of the particular PDS as some of the data can be manipulated for example Facebook Likes can be manipulated and bought by creating many different accounts to increase the Likes.

There is not much or almost no research that has been done on social media usage among high school students in Sri Lanka. Statistics on the Government website is also outdated being the most updated was on 2002. Loops Solutions (2014) had conducted a survey on the usage of Facebook and related questionnaire and the results are listed in Appendix 3. Their survey focused on 7 key areas pertaining to Facebook as below:

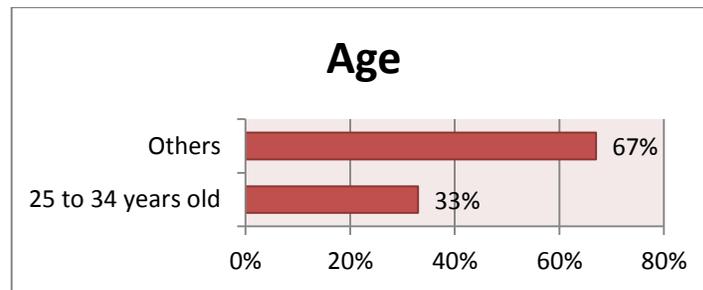
1. What is the Demographic of the total registered Facebook Users in Sri Lanka
2. How Does Facebook Marketing compare to Traditional Media in Sri Lanka?
3. Are Company Facebook Pages effective among the Facebook Users?
4. Are Websites obsolete?
5. Do Ads works?
6. How do people keep themselves updated on events?
7. What is the chatting behavior of people?

The summary of the findings as below:

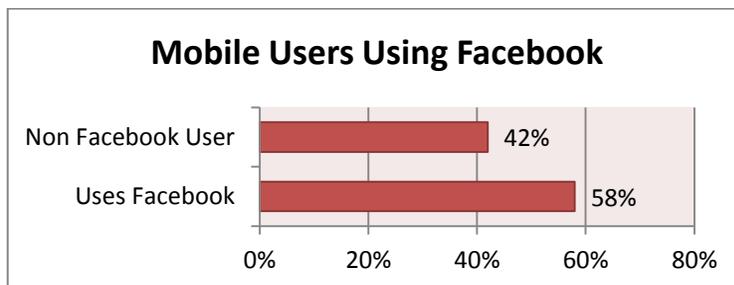
1. There are approximately 2,300,000 Facebook Users in Sri Lanka



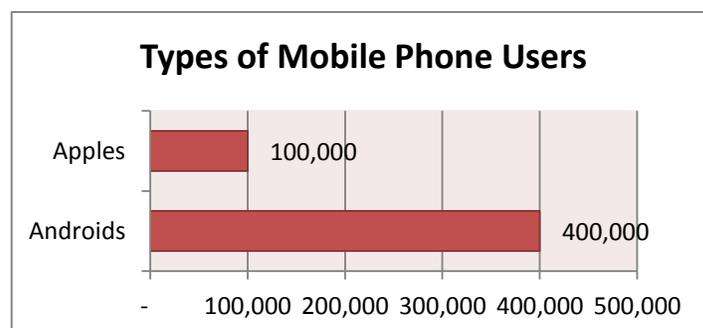
a. 1,420,000 male and 720,000 female



b. 25 to 34 years old make up 33% of the Facebook users

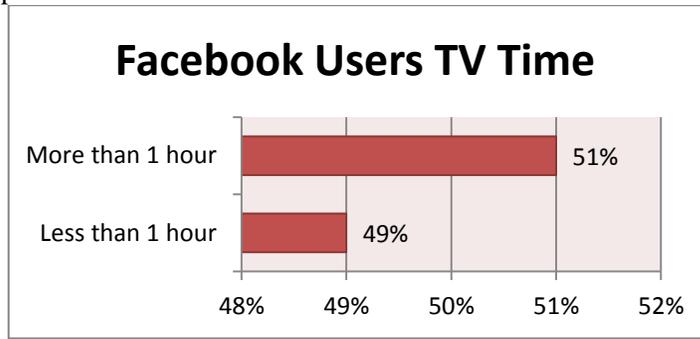


c. 1,300,000 mobile phone users uses Facebook (58% of total Mobile users)

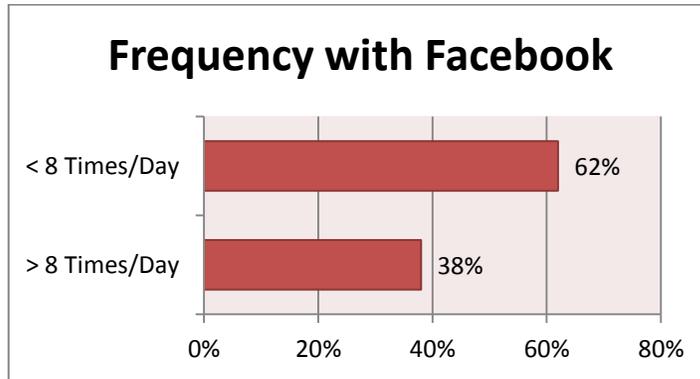


d. 400,000 use Androids and 100,000 use Apple

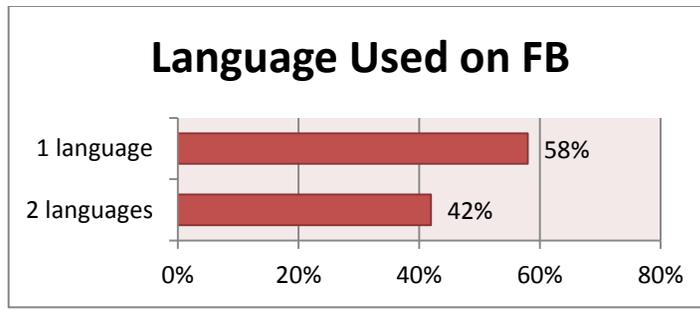
2. How does Facebook compare to Traditional Media



a. 49% of the base watch less than 1 hour of TV per day

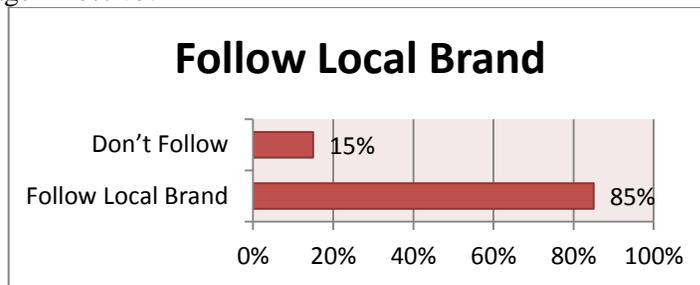


b. 38% check their Facebook account more than 8 times per day

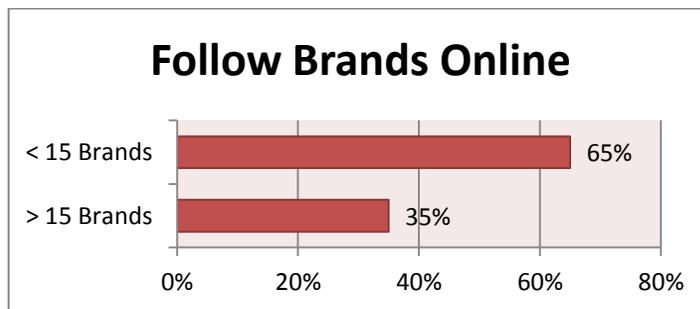


d. 42% of users communicate online using 2 languages

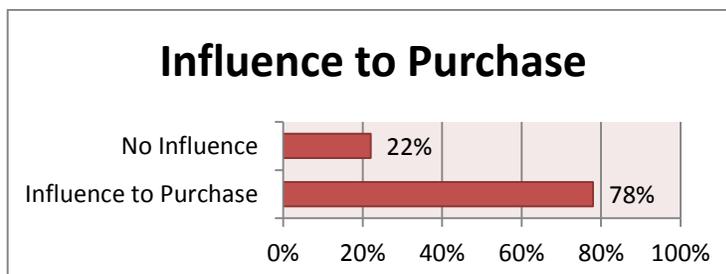
3. Is Company Facebook Page Effective?



a. 85% of users follow local brand online

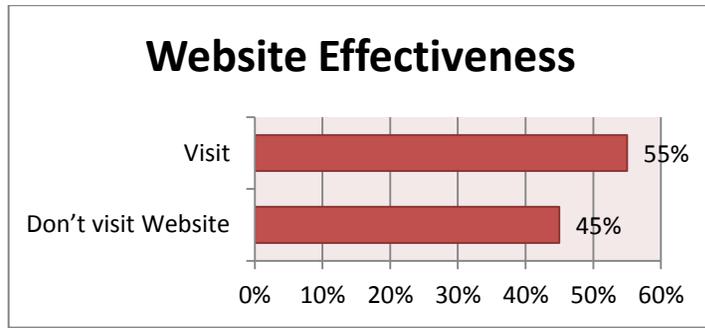


b. 35% of user follow more than 15 brands online

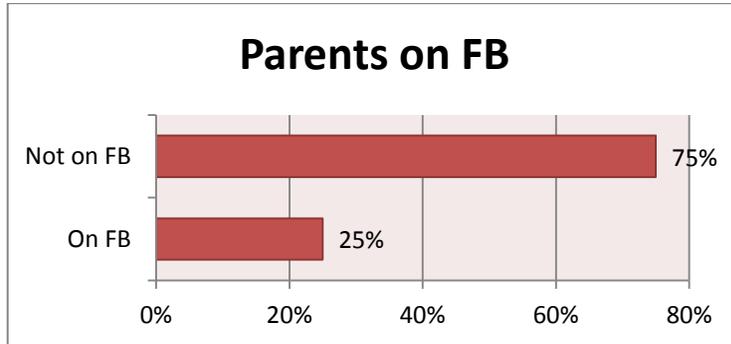


d. 78% of users have been influenced through Facebook to make a purchase

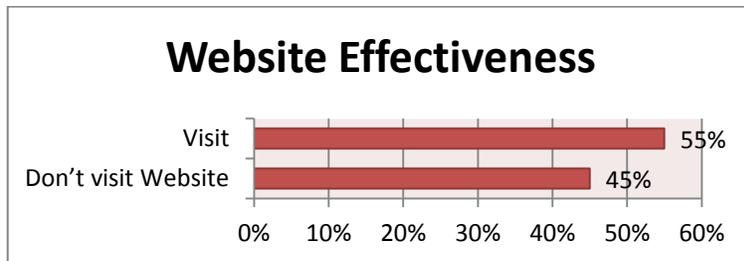
4. Are Websites Obsolete?



a. 45% of users don't visit a brand's website and are happy getting information from their Facebook Page

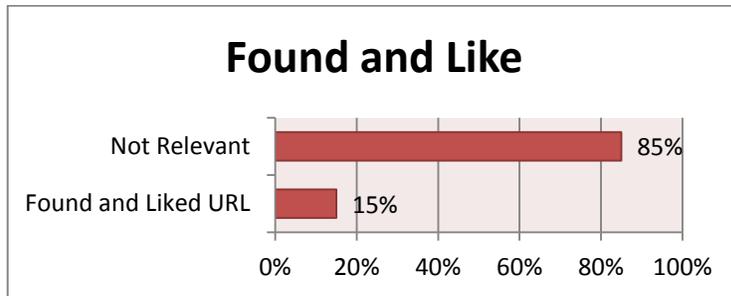


b. 25% have their parents on Facebook too



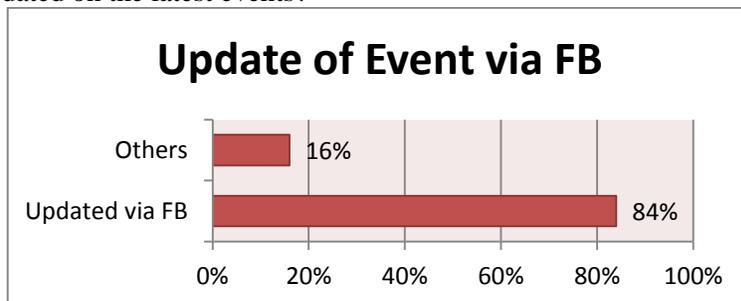
d. 71% believe Facebook ads are more effective than Traditional Advertising

5. Does Ads Works?

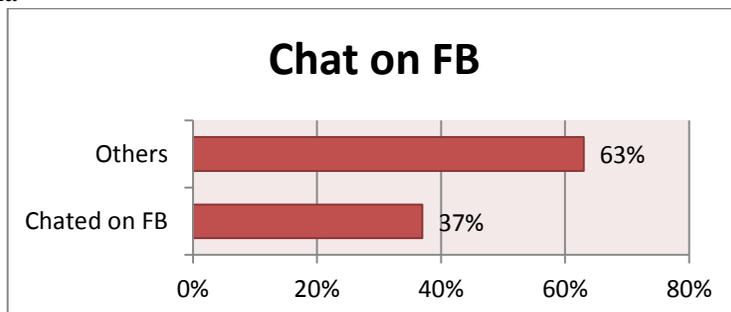


a. 15% of Fans have seen the page's URL printed somewhere and liked it

6. How do people keep updated on the latest events?



7. Chatting on Social Media



3. Results and Findings

Sri Lanka is a country of traditional background of religion and conservative way of life. There are 3 main factors that affect the use of social media among the high school students and PDS in Sri Lanka namely ICT, Governance and Culture. This trend is evolving with the younger generations due to the education process which exposes them to a different perspective in life out of Sri Lanka. The youths at the high schools are now adopting relatively more open views in the way of socializing. Social media is one of the in-thing to make friends and socialize. The growth of social media is encouraged by the growth of ICT and catapult by aggressive service providers such as Etisalat, Dialog and others service providers on the internet services to all the corners of Sri Lanka. All these trend and directions are showing the same characteristics that once a developing nation is going towards. For PDS not to use this platform will be a lost to them. The time will come when the people will be living social media for example in the developed places such as Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong where social media is a way of life for friends to keep in touch of each other in addition to socializing face to face. These trends are seen in many of the developed countries where friends socialize and communicate face to face with each other over public cafes and still keeping in touch with others using social media at the same time. The cyber socializing happening in our daily life example travelling from one place to another, dining in a restaurant, in the toilets while checking out Facebook, etc. It is very much visible observable evidence for example just by taking a trip in a public transport in Sri Lanka compare to a public transport in Singapore. You will observe that most or not all are engross with their smart phones in a public transport such as in the trains and on a bus ride and similar from Colombo city center to say down south during rush hours. Sri Lanka has not yet reached the peak in the usage of social media relative to the other developed countries. Understanding the variables of the equation will help very much for the PDS to be able to use this platform to the fullest to reap maximum rewards. These findings and trend of social media will be useful for policies makers, private sectors and businesses for more effective decision making in the policy making.

4. Acknowledgement

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